

Faith Formation With Children and Families in a post pandemic world



*Diocese of Davenport –
March 10, 2022*

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Gathering Prayer

*Heavenly Father,
watch over us, those who seek to teach others about You and your
Church.*

*Keep us faithful to our vocation
and to the proclamation of your message.*

Help us recognize and interpret the signs of the times.

*Strengthen us with the gifts of the Spirit,
and help us to serve and love those in our care.*

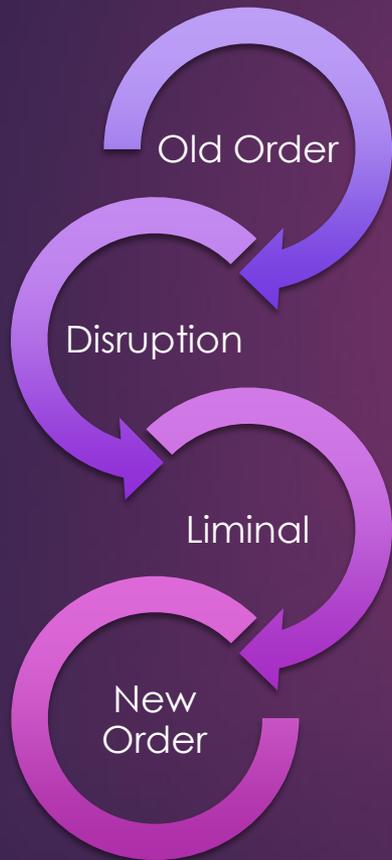
*Give us a vivid sense of your presence in the world
and a knowledge of how to show it to others.*

We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

What have you learned?

- ▶ **Share one word or phrase that sticks with you from your first session. One question you have?**
- ▶ **5 steps for today**
 - ▶ **Taking a look at where we are and where we are going**
 - ▶ **Building Capacity for Faith Formation with Families and Children**
 - ▶ **Evaluation processes and methods**
 - ▶ **Technology - new ideas**
 - ▶ **Putting a plan together with families as the focus**

Where Are We Today?



Liminal space - comes from the Latin root, *limen*, which means “threshold.”

The liminal space is the “crossing over” space – a space where you have left something behind, and you are not yet fully in something else. ... It shakes us out of habit and invites us to change...it is an Invitation to surrender and to be transformed

What We're Learning

Focusing on People (people over programs)

Expanding Vision of Church & Faith
Formation

Using New Hybrid Approaches

Being Synchronous & Asynchronous

Being Mobile

Using Traditional Tools in New Ways

Connecting through Social Media

**Where we
have Been**

**Where we
are Going**

Will churches try to return to business as usual in faith formation—returning to the approaches, curriculum, programming, settings, and schedules they used prior to March 2020?

OR

Will leaders listen to the needs of their people and their situation today; identify how their lives have been impacted by the pandemic and the issues, struggles, joys, and challenges they face; discern how to respond to this new context; and then develop new and innovative faith formation—content, approaches, methods, media—that responds to people today?

How will you respond?

Focusing on “How Shall We Live Now?”

As we enter the new post-pandemic world, the church has the opportunity to help people of all ages answer the question

“How shall we live now?”

The pandemic has disrupted our lives in ways that we have only begun to name. Everyone is searching for meaning and purpose – now in this new un-chartered post-pandemic world.

- ✦ What are the approaches, resources, people, and wisdom we need to address this question?**
- ✦ How can we form people in a Christian way of life today?**

Promoting the Well-being of People

There is a tremendous opportunity for churches and faith formation to focus on wellbeing through pastoral care, community life, support groups, educational programs/activities, and resources.

- ◆ How can you listen for the anxieties, stresses, struggles, and worries of people of all ages, and especially of children, teens, and parents?
- ◆ How can the church community and faith formation proactively address the mental health needs of individuals and parents, and promote their sense of wellbeing, purpose, and meaning in life?

Addressing the Injustices & Inequalities in U.S. Society

This is a tremendous opportunity for the church community to join with the younger generations—to work as partners in transforming the world. This is a great opportunity for intergenerational connection and action—the young and old working together for justice.

- ◆ How can you listen to the stories and struggles of people experiencing injustice?
- ◆ How can you observe and analyze the social forces in your community (and the nation) that give rise to injustice?
- ◆ How can the church community and faith formation educate people of all ages in a faith that does justice and engage them in transformative actions—personal, communal, and systemic—that address injustice: racism, economic inequality, climate change, immigration?

Embracing Hybrid Lives & Hybrid Christian Communities

We live in a hybrid world! We can design new **hybrid** models of faith formation that integrate in-person gatherings at church or in family groups or in small group meetings with online playlists that provide a menu of learning experiences on the theme of the program.

Hybrid models of faith formation are more resilient, flexible, and adaptable—just what we need to respond to the challenges of change in our world and in lives of our people!

- ◆ How can the church community and faith formation create, strengthen and/or expand hybrid initiatives that utilize in-person settings with online platforms and digital tools, methods, and media for nurturing relationships, growing spiritually, worshipping, learning, and engaging in ministry in the post-pandemic world?

Reconnecting the Generations

This may be the moment when your church makes a commitment to become more *intentionally* intergenerational in all that it does.

- ◆ Transforming multigenerational into intergenerational
- ◆ Engaging families as a whole
- ◆ Helping parents be the primary educators of the faith
- ◆ Transforming age-specific into intergenerational
- ◆ Designing new intergenerational initiatives.
- ◆ Engaging with the neighborhood community intergenerationally



Time to Reinvent Faith Formation!



START WITH WHY... *Why do we do what we do?*

And then question – What do you want to let go of?

What do you want to keep?

What can you re-invent?

How can you move your programs into the future?

What do you need to do to build capacity for Faith

Formation with families?

In early years of faith formation, the main place for formation was in the homes, the school, and the church.

Over time this has shifted... now we recognize that faith formation happens every moment in every day. Ordinary moments give us an opportunity to experience and respond to the extraordinary- so we recognize that faith formation happens at home, at church, online, and in the broader context of the world- as people connect to God in their every day lives.



The work of the church with the family is to equip, resource, partner, and support families.

TRENDS IN MINISTRY TO FAMILIES:

- **Families have disappeared and/or are disconnected**
- **Shifts toward on-demand**
- **Faith formation is happening outside Sunday mornings and the church building**
- **Relationships are essential**
- **Some embrace technology while others are not interested**
- **Lack of response from families**

Shifts in Faith Formation

- **Instruction -> Practice**
- **Age-graded -> Family/Intergenerational**
- **Large group -> Small group**
- **One track -> Pathways and playlists**
- **One hour a week -> 24/7 on demand**
- **Yearly planning -> shorter, “seasonal” modules**

We can look at these shifts as opportunities!

Building Capacity for Faith Formation



How do we become capacity builders?

- ▶ We develop our organization's strengths and sustainability.
- ▶ We look to improve and enhance our ability to achieve our mission!
- ▶ Uncover and discover assets and strengths of the community, the wider church, online, etc.
- ▶ Seek to improve the church's ability to achieve its mission and sustain itself over time – by looking at Leadership, finances, facilities, communication, technology, partnerships with other churches and community organizations, and programmatic resources in all forms.

Building Capacity for Faith Formation pt 2



- ▶ **Do a capacity assessment**
- ▶ **Curate new resources- there is a lot of free material out there!**
- ▶ **Develop Leaders Well**
 - **Use a leadership checklist or survey**
 - **Use a Ministries Guide and Gifts Inventory and match people**
 - **Equip and empower them, train them**
 - **See John Roberto's article on Capacity Building for resources**

Building a More Adaptive, Responsive, Resilient, Flexible Faith Formation

1. Informed by research on forming faith
2. Focusing on goals for faith maturing
3. Embracing holistic faith formation: intergenerational, family, and life stages
4. Scheduling in seasonal menus with a variety of programming: content, formats, times, spaces
5. Programming with three models & three spaces: online, hybrid, and physical
6. Personalizing through playlists of faith forming content and experiences
7. **Evaluate and get feedback along the way**

Building a More Adaptive, Responsive, Resilient, Flexible Faith Formation

Evaluate and get feedback along the way

How?

Surveys, focus groups, file card – 2 questions, verbal one question at end of session, texting apps, signs around the room and people move, apps that collect and tabulate data instantly and post visually, etc.

Begin with WHY: Goals for Maturing in Faith

Jesus

- Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ

Discipleship

- Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life

Bible

- Reading and studying the Bible—its message, meaning, and application to life today

Teachings

- Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of the Catholic faith and integrating its meaning into one's life

Praying

- Praying—together and by ourselves—and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines

Begin with WHY: Goals for Maturing in Faith

Morality

- Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values

Serving Justice

- Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace.

Worship

- Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship, ritual celebrations, and the seasons of the church year

Engagement

- Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community

Gifts

- Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one's gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world

Ministry Essentials

Relationships

Flexibility

Keep it
Simple

Equip
Families

Faith
Foundations

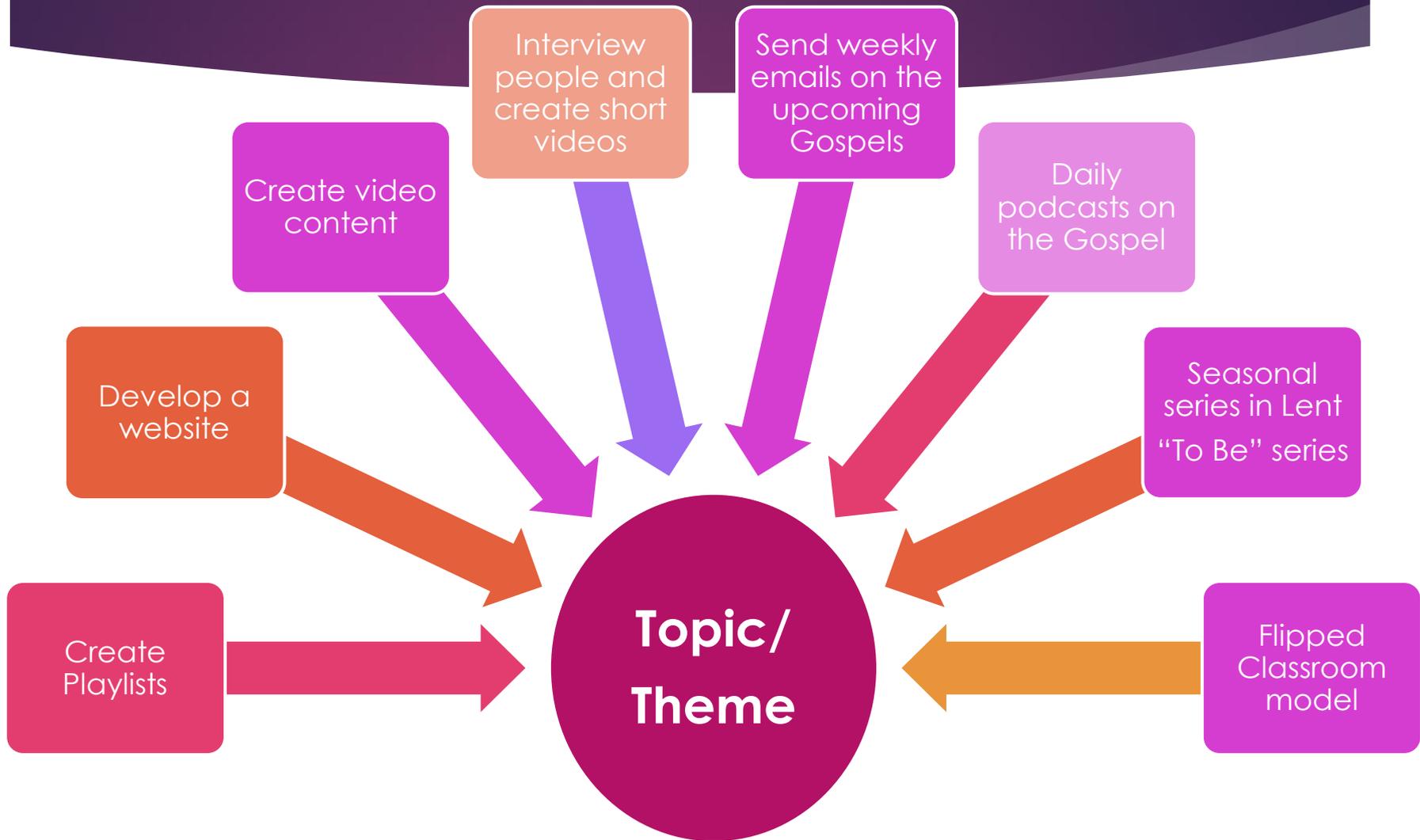
Hybrid

Faith
Practices

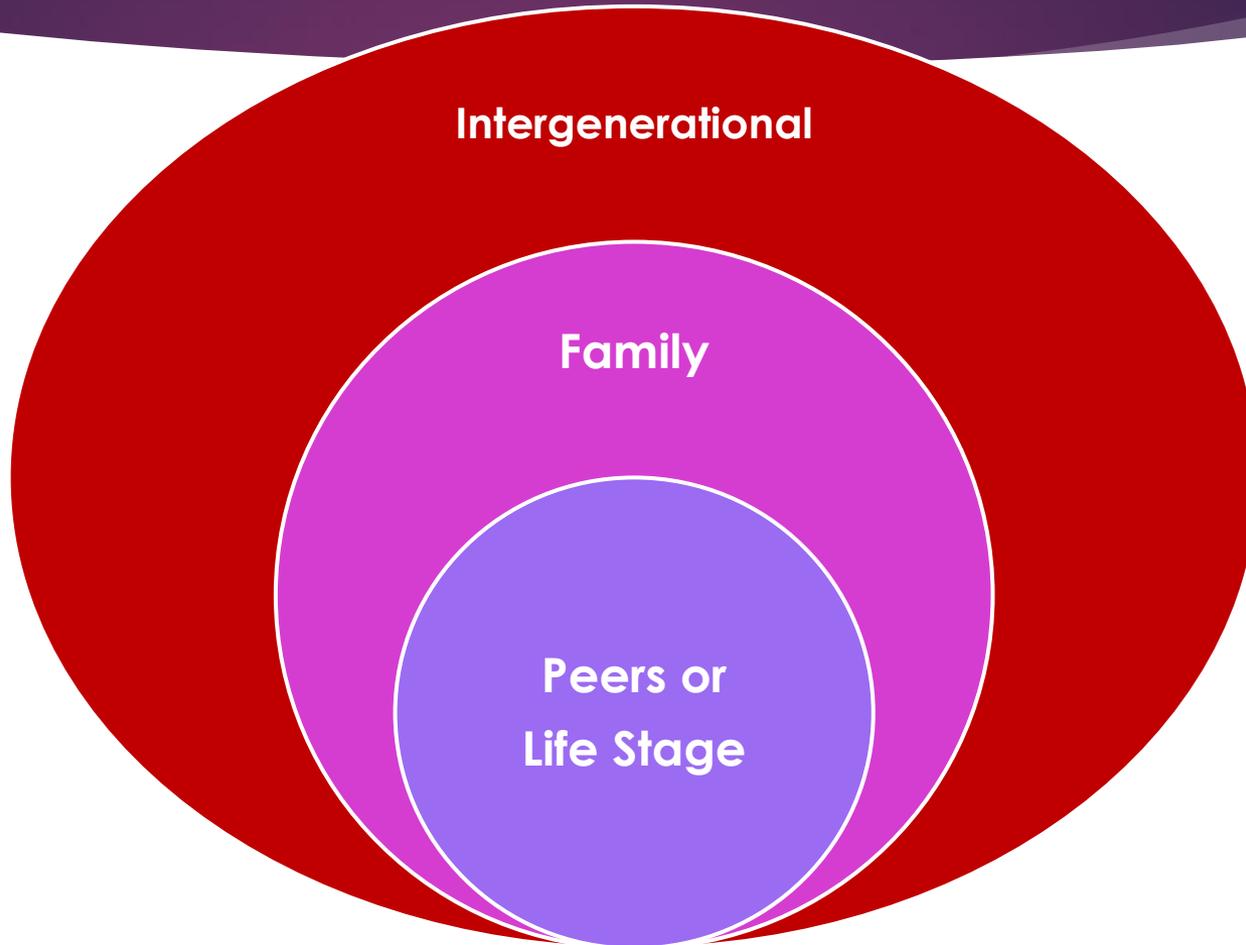
One Goal, Many Methods & Media



Use Technology

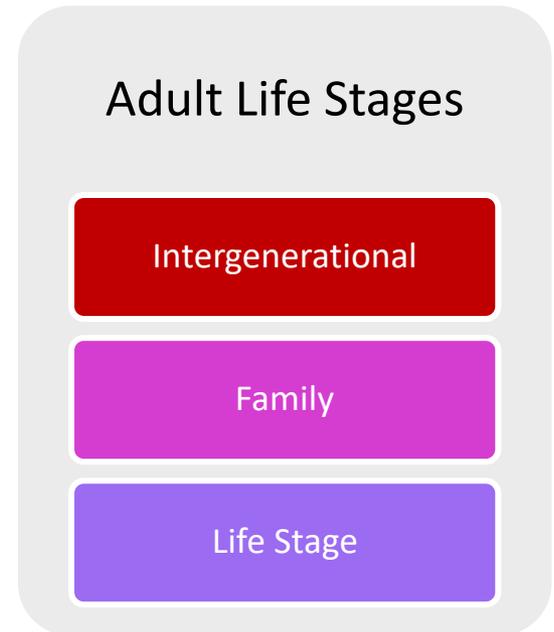
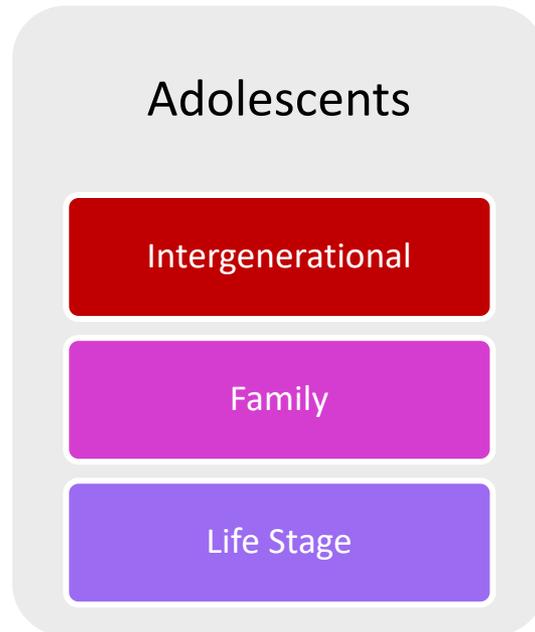
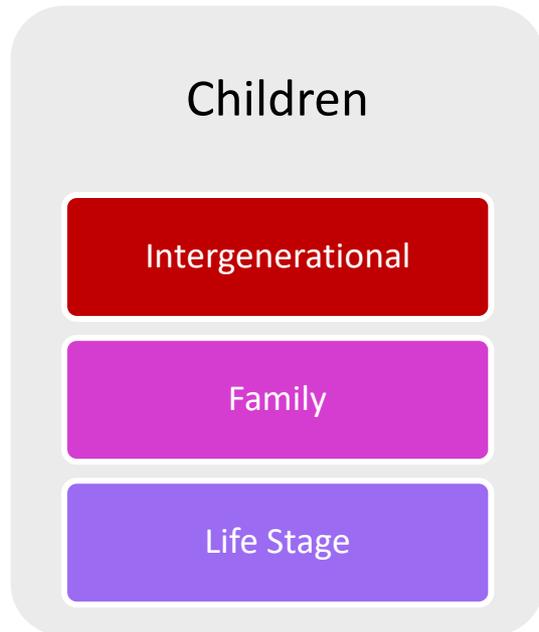


Embracing Holistic Formation



Holistic & Lifelong

Three Kinds of Faith Forming Experiences



Holistic Faith Formation

Intergenerational

- Participate in several celebrations of Church year feasts & seasons
- Join the community in a service project
- Participate in a leadership role or church ministry

Family

- Develop a faith practice each season: prayer, Bible reading, etc.
- Transition from a classroom model to a family model
- Celebrate church year seasons at home
- Participate in two whole family programs at church
- Participate in two service projects as a family

Life Stage / Peer Specific

- Select one's participation in courses, workshops, retreats, vacation Bible school, service projects and mission trips, etc.

Hybrid Programming

In-person gathered
faith formation + at-
home online faith
formation (playlists)

In-person gathered
+ at-home online
(playlists) + online
gatherings

In-person gathered
+ livestream or
video presentations
+ at-home online
(playlist)

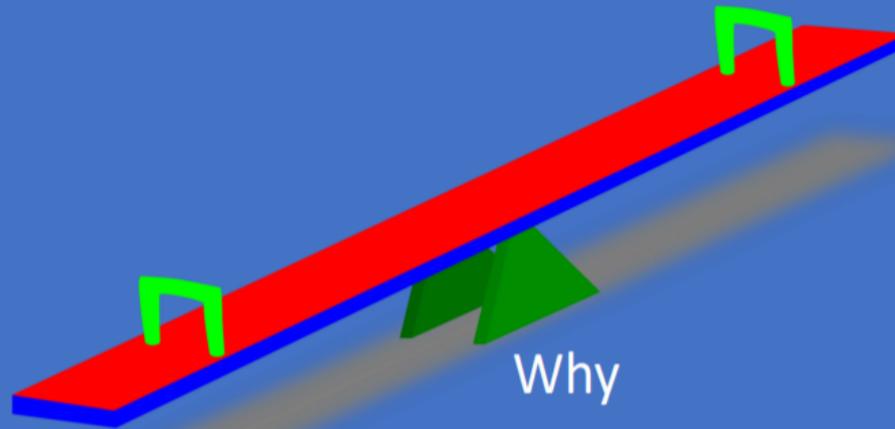
Online + in-person
small group
gatherings + playlist

Worship + online
faith formation
(weekly playlist)

Its all about BALANCE....

Format

In-Person	Hybrid	On-line/ Digital
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Seasonal Menus

Seasons: Sept – Dec Jan – April May – Aug

Variety of programming: content, formats, times, spaces



Programming	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
Life Issues				
Spiritual Formation				
Scripture				
Theological Themes				
Justice & Service				
Seasons				
Prayer & Worship				

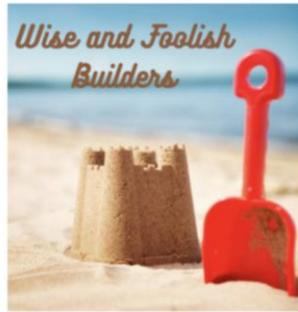
No matter what we create/plan/offer don't forget to build this ministry in a way that helps children and their parents build and sharpen their spiritual toolbox.



- ▶ Create opportunities to:
- ▶ Engage the Story
- ▶ To participate in an intentional liturgy
- ▶ To experience rituals they can return to as they move through lifelong faith formation
- ▶ To build relationships
- ▶ To claim their experiences with memory markers
- ▶ To wonder
- ▶ To work: Times for play, internal and external processing, and response through faithful action

The Wise and Foolish Builder

"The wise man (all people) built his house upon the rock..." may be a song that you sing or sang in Sunday School or Vacation Bible School or summer camp. It comes from a parable that Jesus told his followers about listening to and putting into practice what he has been teaching. We can also use this story to talk about making wise or foolish choices. Start by reading the Bible Story or watching the video and going through the wondering questions. Then pick the activities your family would like to do, as many or few as you like. Close your family faith time with prayer - use your own or the one provided.



Bible Story

- Read the story of The Wise and Foolish Builder in your favorite Bible Story Book, in the [Deep Blue Bible Storybook](#), or in [Matthew 7:24-27](#).
- Wonder about the story together:
 - I wonder if you can remember a storm with lots of rain and wind.
 - I wonder what happens to a house when it is built on the sand when rains and winds come.
 - I wonder what happens to a house built on rock (or a strong foundation) when rains and wind come.
 - I wonder if you can think of a time when you listened to a wise friend or adult.
 - I wonder if you can think of a time when you did not listen to a wise friend or adult.
 - I wonder how you listen to Jesus' teachings.
- Prayer:
 - Dear God, thank you for Jesus' parables to teach us about making good choices. Help us remember what Jesus said about the builder of the house on the sand and rock. Help us to make good choices. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



[Deep Blue Kids Video about the Wise and Foolish Builders](#)

Michigan Conference UMC Children's Ministry

"Faith & Family Playlist" Rev. Kathy Pittenger

Activities

1. Printable [Puzzle](#)
2. [Building a Good Foundation Activity](#)
3. Activity [Activity Bulletin](#)
4. [Deep Blue Lesson for at Home](#)

Other activity ideas include:

- Make Sand Art
- Paint a rock with an encouraging message and put it somewhere so others can see it
- Do a house/tower building experiment: What kind of materials create a strong foundation? What kind of materials might make a foundation weak or unsteady? Build a house on a strong foundation and a weak foundation. What is the same? What is different?

Songs



Book

Most People by Michael Leannah



Building strong foundations in our communities means understanding that most people care about one another and also want to have a strong community. After you read/watch the book, discuss these talking points: How have you seen people being kind in your community? When people are not kind, how can you and your family respond? (You may want to tie this in with understanding race, racism and anti-racism. Learn more [here](#).)





First Presbyterian, Stillwater, OK

<https://www.fpcffaithfulfamilies.com>

FAITH IN AN ANXIOUS WORLD

Anxiety is on the rise in our world, and not just because we're in the midst of a pandemic. How do we respond to the anxiety we feel? What might God be telling us through our anxiety? And how does our faith guide us in healthy ways to cope? The resources here will supplement what we're discussing on our PYG Zoom meetings each week.

READ/WATCH/LISTEN



Read
Spend some time reflecting on these stories where Jesus literally "gets in the boat" with the disciples during an anxious time.
Mark 6:45-51
Mark 4:35-41
Luke 5:1-11



Watch
Four videos from the series: "Faith in an Anxious World" (Fuller Youth Institute)
Session 1 - Life in an Anxious World



Session 2 - Life in a Relational World



Session 3 - Life in a Hurting World



Session 4 - Life in a Thriving World

WONDER



- Wonder:
- What's making your boat feel unsteady lately? Make a list of your anxieties.
 - I wonder what God might be trying to tell you? Where do you see God at work in the midst of your anxiety?
 - I wonder what healthy ways you've tried to learn to cope with stress?
 - I wonder who in your life you can talk to safely about the anxieties you're experiencing?

PRAY



PRAYER CHALLENGE

Examen

1. Recognize God's presence with you.
2. Reflect on your "highs" from the day. For what moment am I most grateful? When did I give and receive the most love? When did I feel most alive today?
3. Reflect on your "lows" from the day. For what moment am I least grateful? When did I give and receive the least love? When did I most feel life draining from me?
4. Pray the day. Share with God - praise, thanksgiving, repentance, forgiveness, and petitions that come from the day.

Regular mindfulness/review of your day using an ancient spiritual practice called the prayer of Examen is a helpful way not only to connect with God, but to also manage anxiety.

- Three options for practicing Examen:
1. Use the Prayer Challenge posted here.
 2. Download the "Reimagining Examen" app on your device
 3. Use this [series of videos](#) from Fuller Studio to guide you through the prayer.

DO



Grow Your Circle
Who is in your trusted circle of adults you feel comfortable calling on when you need to talk about how you feel?
Check in with one of those adults this week. Share what you find making you anxious lately and ask if they can share any helpful practices to listen to and learn from their anxiety.



Innovation

Innovation

Enhance & Create



- ▶ Enhance current offerings and/or operations, e.g.,
 - ▶ offering one program in multiple formats (physical gathering, online, hybrid, and homeschooling) to accommodate the needs and safety concerns of people
 - ▶ utilizing digital technologies to deliver existing faith formation, such as live streaming and video conferencing
- ▶ Create new initiatives that generate growth or reach new audiences
 - ▶ family-centered faith formation at home or in family clusters
 - ▶ online faith formation with digital learning platforms, video gatherings, playlists of faith forming experiences to provide the programming content

Next Steps...

- Why/Goals
- What Keep/What Stop/What's New?
- Planning
- Models
- Playlists
- Pick one thing that you are going focus on first

Pause for Questions....



Blessing

Go knowing that God has called you into ministry for a time such as this.

Lean on all that God has gifted you with as you do this important work.

Remember, you are not alone. God is with you, Christ is beside you, and the Holy Spirit is alive in you.

Go in peace to continue God's work. Amen.

Thank you!



Resources

www.LifelongFaith.com

Go to “Planning Clinic” under Webinar

Catzel@churchofpresentation.org